

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A surgical stapler comprising:

a first body portion having an anvil defining a fastener forming surface;

a second body portion configured to releasably mate with the first body portion, the second body portion including a retention channel having a window defined at a proximal portion thereof;

a disposable loading unit removably supported in the second body portion, the disposable loading unit including:

a cartridge having a tissue contacting surface and defining a plurality of slots therein;

a plurality of surgical fasteners disposed in the slots of the cartridge;

a plurality of ejectors positioned adjacent the surgical fasteners; and

an actuator configured to translate through the cartridge to sequentially interact with the ejectors, the actuator having an engagement structure;

an elongated actuation member mounted for longitudinal movement within the cartridge through a plurality of positions, the plurality of positions including a first proximal position, a first distal position, and a second proximal position, the elongated actuation member having an engagement member releasably coupled to the engagement structure to enable pushing and pulling of the actuation member to effect movement of the ~~actuation member~~ actuator in ~~proximal distal~~ and ~~distal proximal~~ directions, respectively; and

a locking mechanism including a biasing member and a locking member positionable

between first and second positions, the biasing member biasing the locking member to its first position when the actuation member is in its first proximal position and the locking member being biased to the second position for engaging the window of the ~~actuation member~~ retention channel when the actuation member is in its second proximal position.

Claim 2 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 1, wherein the biasing member moves from a proximal portion of the retention channel to a distal portion of the retention channel as the actuation member moves from its first proximal position to its first distal position.

Claim 3 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 2, wherein the biasing member biases the locking member to its first position when the biasing member is in the proximal portion of the retention channel.

Claim 4 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 1, wherein the retention channel includes complementary engagement structures for releasably securing the disposable loading unit therein.

Claim 5 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 1, further including an elongated knife slot extending through the tissue contacting surface.

Claim 6 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 1, further including a protective housing dimensioned to enclose a knife blade.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The surgical stapler of claim 6, wherein the protective housing is formed adjacent ~~the~~ a proximal end of the disposable loading unit.

Claim 8 (original): The surgical stapler of claim 1, wherein the disposable loading unit is composed of a liquid crystal polymer material.

Claim 9 (new): A surgical stapler comprising:

first and second body portions configured to releasably mate with one another wherein the second body portion includes a retention channel, the retention channel defining at least one window in a proximal region thereof;

a disposable loading unit removably supported in the second body portion, the disposable loading unit including a cartridge and an actuator, the actuator including an engagement structure wherein the actuator is configured to translate through the cartridge;

an elongated actuation member mounted for longitudinal movement within the disposable loading unit through a plurality of positions, the plurality of positions including first and second proximal positions, the elongated actuation member having an engagement member releasably coupled to the engagement structure to enable pushing and pulling of the actuation member to effect movement of the actuator in distal and proximal directions, respectively; and

a locking mechanism including a biasing member and a locking member, the locking member positionable between first and second positions wherein the biasing member engages the locking member and biases the locking member to its first unlocking position when the actuation member is in its first proximal position.

Claim 10 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, wherein the locking member is biased to its second position for engaging the at least one window of the retention channel when the actuation member is in its second proximal position.

Claim 11 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 10, wherein the plurality of positions further includes a first distal position.

Claim 12 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 11, wherein the biasing member moves from a proximal region of the retention channel to a distal region of the retention channel as the actuation member moves from its first proximal position to its first distal position.

Claim 13 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 12, wherein the biasing member biases the locking member to its first unlocking position when the biasing member is in the proximal region of the retention channel.

Claim 14 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, wherein the retention channel includes complementary engagement structures for releasably securing the disposable loading unit therein.

Claim 15 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, further including an elongated knife slot extending through a tissue contacting surface of the disposable loading unit.

Claim 16 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, further including a protective housing dimensioned to enclose a knife blade.

Claim 17 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 16, wherein the protective housing is formed adjacent a proximal end of the disposable loading unit.

Claim 18 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, wherein the disposable loading unit is composed of a liquid crystal polymer material.

Claim 19 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, wherein the elongated actuation member is retained in its second proximal position when the locking member in its locking second position.

Claim 20 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 9, wherein the first position of the locking member is an unlocking position and the second position of the locking member is a locking position.

Claim 21 (new): The surgical stapler of claim 10, wherein the actuation member is distal of its first proximal position, and the biasing member is not engaged with the locking member and is in an unlocking position with respect to the locking member.